DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 572 JC 880 165

AUTHOR Durnovo, Maya; McCrohan, Betty
TITLE Strategies for Serving the Neglected Majority: An Institutional Framework for Addressing Students' Needs over the Next Decade.
PUB DATE 21 Nov 87
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the California Association of Community Colleges (58th, Santa Clara, CA, November 20-22, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Students; *Ancillary School Services; Community Colleges; *Females; *Nontraditional Students; *Reentry Students; Self Esteem; *Student Development; *Student Personnel Services; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students
IDENTIFIERS Carl D Perkins Vocational Education Act 1984

ABSTRACT

In 1983, the Houston Community College System established the Women's Support Services Department (WSSD) to support and encourage the new roles and opportunities emerging for women. During its first year of operation, the WSSD offered special seminars to over 300 women who anticipated returning to college. The WSSD, which is supported by a $320,000 grant from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, provides: (1) workshops, seminars, and conferences on the current job market, qualifications needed, resume writing, interviews, and changing careers; (2) a caring, energetic, and enthusiastic staff, including the director; seminar, placement, and childcare specialists; and two professional counselors, who motivate, inspire, and generally support program participants; and (3) weekly support groups, individual counseling, and special activities to build self-esteem and self-confidence. In addition, the WSSD offers such special activities as career tours to three different campus sites, career and self-exploration workshops, and weekly brown bag lunches examining personal/emotional issues. The success of Houston Community College Women's Support Services is attributed to institutional commitment, its excellent full-time staff, and its instructional support. (EJV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293572

Maya Durnovo, Ed.D.
Director, Women's Support Services

&

Betty McCrohan, M.Ed
Dean, Financial Affairs and Planning

Presentation to the California Association of Community Colleges
58th Annual Convention
November 21, 1987

"Strategies for Serving the Neglected Majority: An Institutional Framework for Addressing Students' Needs Over the Next Decade"

JC 880 165

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Durnovo

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Introduction

In the next century, this country will need a capable work force prepared to cope with change. Community colleges must prepare for and adapt to a new kind of student in a new world. There's an enrollment crisis coming. As community college educators, we can choose between a shortfall in clients or a serious analysis of student enrollment resources. We don't need to go to futurists to study enrollment trends; in the year 2000, the four-year-old kindergarten students of today will comprise the college entrant pool. Who will those students be?

Current demographics indicate that the enrollment pool of the next decade will be heavily minority. In fact, it's estimated that minorities will comprise 43% of the college age population at the turn of the century, as opposed to 20% of the national population. In addition, these prospects will be, to a large degree: part-time, employed, older, urban, female and single head of household. Of particular significance are three characteristics shared by kindergarten students throughout the western region of the United States: 1) more than 23% are **below** the poverty line -- the highest percentage in years; 2) a larger number have identified disabilities and handicaps which, while not removing them from the college pool, will need to be accommodated; and 3) there's been a dramatic increase in the level of four-year-olds who don't speak English. The shift toward these characteristics will have a minimal impact on the highly selective senior institutions; community colleges, however, will be profoundly impacted.

In order to keep the open door from being a revolving door, Houston Community College System (HCCS) is utilizing federal monies available to all public community/junior colleges from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act, PL 98-524. This Act was enacted on Oct. 19, 1984, to replace the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and its subsequent amendments. The Act has two primary purposes:

1. To provide access to vocational education, particularly in regard to populations with special needs; and
2. To provide quality programs by assisting (postsecondary) institutions to develop, expand, improve and update technical and vocational education.

HCCS applied for and received grant money from the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act to fund its Women's Support Services, a recruitment/retention strategy that addresses the multiple needs of women today, many of whom are coming to HCCS for an education.

Programs for women are a relatively new dimension in higher education. Colleges and universities were originally established by men for men. The structure was based on male values, male traditions and male goals. It has only been since 1834 that women were accepted into college and well into the 20th century before they enrolled in significant numbers. Considering today's enrollment, we really have "come a long way."

In 1986, women received 50.8% of the bachelor's degrees (Higher Education & National Affairs, 1987). Despite that impressive number, it is still not easy for older women, particularly for those who became homemakers first, or worked immediately out of high school, or acquired on-the-job skills without formal training. These are the women who are now returning to college. These are the women who often hesitate to enroll because they are no longer 18 years of age. Yet, these are the women who are eager to enroll; they only need encouragement and guidance.

Women's Support Services welcomes and assists this growing population. Today, over 4,000 women per year are drawn to the college by the vast array of services.

Assessment and Implementation

In 1983, Houston Community College committed itself to meeting the educational needs of women. The administration felt that the institutional structure of the community college had to provide a system to support and encourage the new roles emerging for women. The mechanism for this support was established through a Woman's Support Services Department. The department was introduced in 1983 and provided special seminars to assist women who anticipated returning to college. Over 300 women participated in these seminars. Within the next two years, as the number of women increased, the services were expanded to provided more in-depth information, more encouragement to enter non-traditional career fields, and additional workshops that focused on building self-esteem and self-confidence.

The administration was impressed with the burgeoning numbers and began plans to institutionalize the program. In particular, the college president understood that women have not built powerful careers or obtained the best jobs because they lack three things: information, qualifications, and self-confidence. In 1987, the administration institutionalized the Women's Support Services to help women in these three areas.

Funding

The funding source, Carl D. Perkins, has increased it's allocation on a yearly basis. In 1983 the college received its first allocation, $20,000. In 1987-1988 the college was given $320,000. The success of the program attracted not only many women, but additional funding.

Program Focus

The program focus is in three areas:

1. Providing information.

Information is delivered through creative workshops, seminars and conferences that build a general knowledge base. That knowledge base centers around practical issues: the current job market, qualifications needed, salaries, how to interview, how to write an effective resume, how to change careers, etc. Over 150 individual seminars are scheduled throughout the year and approximately 100 women join these activities every week.

Seminars dealing with job interviewing skills, resume writing, job placement, finding the hidden job market are particularly popular. As more women enter the job market, they need practical skills to assist them in locating good paying jobs and in being selected from the growing pool of applicants.

Six times a year large conferences are organized to address specific issues in depth. For example, this year we conducted: Careers in the 1990's, Legal Issues, Job Preparation and an Ego-Booster (an all-day conference on building self-esteem). The Legal Conference drew over 200 women and had to be re-scheduled for the Spring. We were overwhelmed with the response to the point that we ran out of physical space! Careers in the 1990's attracted 142 women.

2. Providing support to enable women to become qualified.

The Women's Support Services staff is energetic and enthusiastic. They know how to motivate and inspire women who are eager to return to college, but timid. One of the keys to the success of this department is the extraordinary professionals who believe in what they are doing. Their ability to reach women is remarkable. They know how to urge, how to push gently and how to support other women. The staff stresses the importance of being qualified because having appropriate credentials is the first step toward building a career.

3. Providing services and activities to help women build self-confidence. Weekly support groups, individual counseling and special activities focus on self-esteem and self-confidence. Seminars on building self-esteem consistently fill to capacity, indicating that this is a needed area. Activities dealing with self-esteem are scheduled every month and due to the response, additional workshops will be added next year.

Staff

The staff is composed of sensitive women administrators and counselors who understand the tacit terror that women face when they cross the college threshold for the first time, particularly at the age of 36, 46, 56 or even 66. It's a staff who welcomes the newcomer with eagerness and warmth that translates into, "It's okay, no matter what my age." It's a deeply felt commitment to a necessary cause.

Six professional women compose the staff: a director, a seminar specialist who designs over 150 seminars/workshops per year, a placement specialist who secures positions in the local job market, a child care specialist who assists in identifying qualified students for child care services, and two professional counselors. Recently, a service to assist women in completing the tedious, yet necessary chore of applying for financial aide was added. One of the staff members identified the need and became an expert in completing financial aid applications. This is the kind of commitment the staff exhibits. They identify a need and find ways to meet it.

The staff members are powerful role models who understand what women are experiencing and who can inspire women to reach beyond their fears. Our department is special because it provides practical assistance as well as a fertile

environment that fosters personal growth, insight, and knowledge. The fervor generated by each staff member is a direct result of her passion toward her work.

Special Activities

Due to the multi-campus nature of Houston Community College (Houston Community College has 34 campus sites dispersed throughout the Houston Metroplex) tours provide a natural avenue for the exploration of new careers. Four times a year the department organizes career tours. A bus is secured to take 50 women to three campus sites in order to introduce women to *new* career fields.

Women's Support Services participants receive a personal tour from the faculty, and they meet currently enrolled students. They are welcomed with warmth and heartfelt sincerity. Not surprisingly, the women respond. They respond because encouragement is sincere and an important door has opened, one that invites the potential student to explore an opportunity that otherwise may *never* have been considered. In other words, their awareness is dramatically expanded, and equally important, they get "special treatment." It's also "safer" and more interesting to investigate a new area when a group attends together. One does not find individual women, particularly those in their 30's or 40's or 50's, visiting programs on their own.

The programs selected for the tour are carefully identified. They must lead to viable careers. The staff is also keenly interested in expanding the traditional career selection to more non-traditional areas such as aircraft maintenance, computer technology, desktop publishing, etc. because these are the fields that need qualified people. These are the current occupations that provide lucrative salaries and future potential. Career Tours attracted approximately 430 women per year.

Women's Support Services also offers career exploration workshops that allow women to explore the inner world of personality make-up and interests. We

believe that a career must meet inner needs; we stress the importance of a career, not merely finding a job.

The inner self is probed through personality assessments (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), interest inventories (Strong Campbell Interest Test), personal values assessment workshops, enhancing self-esteem workshops, and group sharing with other women. The approach is to examine what is needed internally--from a psychological perspective. We know that fulfillment is found through work that meets an inner psychological need. We also know that success is born from loving your work, but *first* you must know what brings inner satisfaction. For example, it's no use to work in the growing and lucrative computer programmer field if you need constant contact and interaction with people.

Participating in self-exploration workshops and taking personality assessments enable participants to examine their needs along with their interests as they explore career changes. The career exploration workshops consistently fill to capacity, and as a result, we offer them monthly with an average enrollment of 100 women.

We then analyze the careers paths that are growing or changing in the current job market. The purpose is to learn what fields are "hot," what will be in demand in the next decade and how to select what suits you best. Likewise, it's important to know how to write a resume that promotes you and your talents, and how to reflect those talents in an interview. Our resume writing/interview workshops are among the most popular.

Then we try to fuse these worlds into a career focus. Often this means learning new skills, developing talents, and becoming more self-confident. The result leads to the discovery of a deeper and more complete self through one's

work. It's not an easy process, nor is it a quick one, but it does promise fulfillment.

Another activity focuses on examining relationship issues. Weekly Brown Bag Lunches are a success because relevant topics are discussed: "Could I be Depressed?," " The Woman Who Loves Too Much," "I Don't Love Him But I Can't Leave Him," and "Emotional and Physical Abuse." Over 35 participants travel to our campus for the one hour discussion.

Women in Transition

This past September we began a program entitled Women in Transition which is designed specifically to assist woman who are making changes. These women are discovering that they need additional skills and qualification and are returning to college.

The Women in Transition program begins with a general orientation to the community college. Orientations attract several hundred women. In September 1987, we had 234 women participate. Of these, 35% enrolled and another 20% plan to enroll in the Spring of 1988.

We probably didn't do anything different from any typical counselor, except that we addressed a specific group---women who had never attended college, or women who dropped out many years ago--and we offered support and encouragement. We motivated these women through our own enthusiasm. The staffs' passion was translated into potential. The women responded. Quite frankly, we were amazed at the response. Only in retrospect did we understand what we had done.

The Women in Transition participants enroll together and travel through their classes as a group. This provides a special support because these women have similar needs and similar fears. The faculty are given a list of female

students who are participants. If they notice someone is absent or in need of assistance, the faculty contact us immediately and we're there to assist. The support from the instructional departments is critically important.

Since August 1, 1987, we have served over 1,200 women.

Results

It is clear that we are meeting a special need, those of women. These are women who would not seek college without our program to encourage and support them. By enrolling at HCCS in a non-traditional program, women are becoming qualified for better jobs and are learning to take risks. Their successes enhance and strengthen their feelings of self-worth and prove the worth of the Women's Support Services concept.

Through the process of helping other women, each Women's Support Services staff member has discovered something about herself. Team work is at the core, which often means resolving interpersonal issues that surface with any group of people working together. It's women learning to work with other women. And through the process, each of us changes and grows as well.

As HCCS moves into the next century, support services such as WSS will continue to make this Texas community college the institution of choice among the neglected majority. Our numbers are a clear indication that HCCS is making good use of federal money to attract and serve citizens who might otherwise be doomed to a cycle of ignorance and poverty.

Conclusions

The success of Houston Community College Women's Support Services is attributed to its institutional commitment, its excellent full-time staff, and it's instructional support. These are the necessary ingredients for successfully meeting the needs of women returning to college.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges JUN 03 1988